ATENEA

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

MATERIALS INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

DECEMBER 2025

institute iMdea materials

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INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to provide all the necessary information to help you prepare and submit your application successfully to the ATENEA programme. It outlines the eligibility criteria, required documents, deadlines, and the application process step by step. We encourage you to read it carefully and refer to it throughout the application period. Should you have any questions that are not addressed here, please consult the Q&A section on our website or contact us directly via e-mail (**info@atenea-cofund.eu**).

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The ATENEA programme will offer ten 30-month Postdoctoral Research (PRs) fellowships in the field of Materials Science and Engineering (MSE), a key knowledge area for many economic activities and one of the four strategic sectors of the Madrid's Regional Research and Innovation Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) where the project will be implemented.

The programme will launch one open call during its 48 months, offering high-level, interdisciplinary and intersectoral training, both in core and advanced scientific topics and transferable skills. After the programme, the fellows will be well-versed, experienced researchers with highly attractive profiles for the academic and non-academic sectors, particularly for industry.

IMDEA Materials Institute (IMDEA Materials) is the beneficiary and coordinator of the ATENEA programme. IMDEA Materials is acknowledged as one of Spain's leading research institutions and received the "María de Maeztu" (MdM) unit of excellence accreditation from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. ATENEA will attract researchers worldwide through Open, Transparent, and Merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) principles.

A two-step evaluation process, carried out by experienced and qualified external experts from an international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary pool, will guarantee the selection of first-class researchers.

The ATENEA programme will be implemented by experienced training and research support staff and will be governed by a consolidated management structure to guarantee its success. All supervisors have an outstanding research track record and extensive experience supervising, guiding and promoting young and more experienced researchers.

Additionally, the ATENEA programme will allow PRs to improve their career prospects by carrying out intersectoral secondments within an associated partners' network of 21 organisations.

FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION

TIMELINE OF THE OPEN CALL

- Info Day: 17 September 2025
- Call open: 20 September 2025
- Call deadline: 15 December 2025
- Eligibility check: January 2026
- Remote evaluation: February – April 2026

- Interviews and ethics review: May - June 2026
- Fellowship start date: June – September 2026

COMMUNICATION WITH THE APPLICANTS

The ATENEA programme is committed to ensuring a transparent and fully informed recruitment process. Applicants will be notified of the results of the selection processes at each step as follows:

1. Application confirmation: each applicant will receive a confirmation e-mail with an assigned reference number.

2. Eligibility check: applicants will be informed whether they are eligible. Non-eligible applicants will receive an e-mail detailing unfulfilled criterion, missing information and means of redress.

3. Evaluation process results: the process will have two phases (remote and interview). All applicants will receive an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) by e-mail after completion of the remote evaluation phase and a Final Evaluation Report (FER) after the selection phase. These documents will contain scores and comments on strengths and weaknesses, regardless of whether they pass to the next step. Selected candidates will receive an official invitation to join the ATENEA programme. Additionally, an official open communication including the fellowships awarded, reserve lists, cut-off scores and funding distribution will be published on the website and properly disseminated.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must meet all the eligibility criteria described below, in line with the MSCA COFUND Postdoctoral programmes requirements:

Postdoctoral Researcher definition. The researcher must be a Postdoctoral Researcher (PR), meaning that they must hold a PhD degree at the call deadline of ATENEA. Researchers who have successfully and unconditionally defended their doctoral thesis before the call deadline but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be considered as postdoctoral researchers and will be considered eligible to apply, provided the other eligibility conditions are respected. In such cases, the researcher/beneficiary should be able to provide on request (for example, to auditors) a formal document from the PhD awarding institution confirming the date of the successful unconditional PhD thesis defence[1].

MSCA mobility rule. The researcher must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the call deadline of ATENEA.

Maximum of eight years (full-time equivalent) experience in research, measured from the date of award of the doctoral degree to the call deadline. Years of experience outside research and career breaks such as parental leave do not count towards the amount of research experience.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/19658?topicIdentifier=HORIZON-MSCA-2025-PF-01-01&topicIdentifierId=HORIZON-MSCA-2025-PF-01-01&isQA=true

Applications submitted online must include all the personal information and details requested on the application website to be eligible. Applicants who do not include all the requested documents will be considered ineligible.

No restrictions on nationality, age and/or gender will be implemented during the selection process.

Only one proposal per candidate will be accepted. If a candidate submits several proposals, only the last one will be considered admissible.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Each applicant must apply in English containing the following information and documents:

Administrative form (1 page) including personal data and contact details, selected research group and supervisor, family or any special status, MSCA mobility rule declaration statement, and any other fields required in the application form such as any special need to be considered during the interview process relating to disability requirements.

Curriculum Vitae (CV). A template will be provided requesting a brief narrative summarising the impact and importance of the main research outputs. The fellows should explain their role in contributing to generating new ideas and hypotheses, and how they have communicated their ideas and research results. The CV will also include personal information, education, professional experience, grants and scholarships, academic awards, projects, publications (avoiding impact factors or H indexes), patents or registered IPR, international secondments, languages, and any other complementary skills or merits.

Scanned copy of official PhD degree or Thesis defense certificate.

Letters of recommendation from a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 2 references (free format).

Research proposal (max. 6 pages) according to the template provided within the application package. The proposal must clearly identify the Research area and the Principal Investigator from IMDEA Materials Institute for which the candidate is applying. It should describe objectives, methodology, work plan, measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, commonalities between the researcher's project, IMDEA Materials and the selected supervisor, and research infrastructure required. The research proposal developed by the candidate will have to encompass, in a broad sense, one of the research areas proposed within the Open Call. Candidates will also have to address in their proposal aspects related to data management and -if relevant- gender issues.

Proof of English. PRs must have a demonstrable level of English. Proof of upper-intermediate level must be included in the application; this should take the form of one of the recognised international qualifications (minimum CEFR B2, Cambridge English First (FCE), PTE Level 3, IELTS 5-6.5 or TOEFL > 72). Copy or internet print of the exam results must be uploaded to the online application system. Applicants from native English-speaking countries can apply without the need for proof of level (a full list of countries is included in the Guide for Applicants). An official degree (including postgraduate) conducted in English as the only language will be also accepted as proof of level, as well as an accreditation (contract) of living at least one-year in an English-speaking country. Alternatively, an official letter from a host institution confirming at least one year of research or work experience conducted exclusively in English may also be used.

Ethics self-assessment, following the Horizon Europe guidelines on ethics. (**https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf**)

APPLICATION FORM AND TEMPLATES TO APPLY

The following application documents can be downloaded from the documents section of the website (**www.atenea-cofund.eu**).

- Application form
- CV (template)
- Research proposal (template)
- Ethics self-assessment (template)
- Redress procedure and form

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The application including all requested documents will be submitted through IMDEA Materials Jobs Portal (**https://jobs.materials.imdea.org/**). The link to the ATENEA application form will be advertised on the project website: **www.atenea-cofund.eu**.

The application process will be open from September 20, 2025, at 9:00 AM (Central European Time) to December 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM (Central European Time).

LIST OF RESEARCH TOPICS AND SUPERVISORS

Eligible candidates will have the freedom to develop their independent research proposal. ATENEA will not strictly predefine the research work carried out by the selected fellows.

The research areas are provided to potential candidates, and the candidates will have to design a research proposal to be submitted as part of the application that is aligned with one of the available topics proposed.

Scientific/academic merits and excellence of the research proposal and the candidates will be the only evaluation criteria.

Possible supervisors will NOT be involved in the evaluation & selection process, neither in the research proposal preparation nor in the evaluation process.

1. NOVEL MATERIALS

1.1 Polymer & Polymer-Based Nanocomposites Discovery: This research stream leverages artificial intelligence and machine-learning models to uncover structure–processing–property relationships and predict compositions with exceptional performance. We place particular emphasis on cutting-edge approaches such as large-language-model–assisted design.

PI: M. Haranczyk

1.2 Simulation- and AI-Driven Porous-Materials Design: This research line focuses on the development of high-throughput computational and data-driven methods to accelerate discovery of porous materials, e.g., metal–organic frameworks, for applications ranging from energy storage to healthcare. Special attention is given to challenging regimes at the edge of current capabilities, including defect-rich structures and interface-dominated systems.

PI: M. Haranczyk

1.3 Nanostructured networks for electrochemical energy storage: The focus of the research line is studying electrochemical energy storage in networks of 1D nanoparticles, with the aim of understanding aspects such as the role of network order and ion size, the mechanisms of reaction propagation through intercalation in nanocarbons and alloying in other chemistries (SnO, Si).

PI: J. J. Vilatela

1.4 Water Electrolysis: The objective of this research line is to engineer advanced electrocatalysts—such as supported metal clusters and single-atom catalysts—with enhanced activity, stability, and selectivity for water electrolysis. The ultimate goal is to improve the efficiency and scalability of green hydrogen production through fundamental insights into catalyst–electrolyte interactions under working conditions and structure–function relationships.

PI: H. Tüysüz

1.5 Fire-safe Polymers: This research line aims to develop next-generation fire-retardant strategies for polymeric materials, including fire-safe energy storage systems (such as Li-ion batteries, supercapacitors, and phase change materials), (nano)composites, bio-based materials, and more.

PI: D.Y. Wang

1.6 Design and discovery of novel materials for transport, energy or health.

PI: Any Principal Investigator from IMDEA Materials Institute

1.7 Harnessing Extracellular Matrix–Driven Microenvironments for Next-Generation Regenerative Therapies: The focus of this research line is the design of extracellular-matrix–inspired microenvironments that guide cell behaviour and regeneration. It aims to recreate essential biochemical and biomechanical cues through advanced biomaterial engineering. By integrating smart, adaptive scaffold architectures, it supports dynamic and instructive signalling. Together, these efforts enable innovative regenerative strategies grounded in ECM-driven control.

PI: Pedro J. Díaz Payno

2. ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

2.1 Novel degradable scaffolds for bone regeneration: This project aims to develop innovative degradable materials that accelerate biological regeneration. Special emphasis is placed on the incorporation of bioactive coatings and factors that enhance cell–material interactions, adding significant value to the regenerative outcomes.

PI: M. Echeverry-Rendón

2.2 Energy-Efficient Steel Processing: The research topic focuses on developing innovative ultrafast heating technologies to optimize steel properties while significantly reducing energy consumption and processing time. The work will explore eco-friendly and sustainable manufacturing approaches compared to conventional methods.

PI: I. Sabirov

2.3 Plastic Waste Recycling: This research line aims to design and develop highly selective and efficient catalytic materials for the thermocatalytic depolymerization of plastic waste into valuable monomers. Emphasis will be placed on understanding reaction mechanisms, optimizing catalyst composition and structure, and improving process efficiency to enable sustainable chemical recycling pathways.

PI: H. Tüysuz

2.4 Electroactive tissue engineering scaffolds for remote healing and repair monitoring: A additive manufacturing of smart materials is reshaping tissue engineering leading to novel therapies for articular defects (ageing and trauma). Multifunctional scaffolds as smart implants will be investigated for enabling remote healing and repair monitoring, acting both as structural elements, selective heat and vibration sources, and self-sensing antennae.

PIs: A. Díaz-Lantada and M. Echeverry-Rendón

2.5 Bioinspired scaffolds swarms for minimal invasion, self-assembly and shape-adaptation in critical size defects: Critical-size bone defects derived from osteosarcoma are among the more relevant current challenges in tissue engineering. The objective of this project is to develop bioinspired scaffolds swarms with the aim of promoting minimally invasive surgery, remote operation, self-assembly and personalized adaptation to patients' needs.

PIs: A. Díaz-Lantada

2.6 E-waste and scraps recycling using the high entropy concept and the powder metallurgy route: The concept of high entropy as a design criterion allows the use of multiple elements in the development of a given microstructure that guarantees a range of target properties. This allows the integral recycling of waste and therefore a more efficient utilization of residues to manufacture high performance alloys.

PI: J. M. Torralba

2.7 Laser Powder Functionalization: This research line focuses on the design and engineering of metal powders with tailored surface chemistry and morphology to enhance laser–material interaction during powder bed laser fusion. The goal is to advance the performance, precision, and reliability of laser-based additive manufacturing through material-level innovations.

PI: J. M. Torralba

2.8. Smart Manufacturing of Structural Composites: The aim of this research line is to develop AI-driven systems for real-time control of composite manufacturing. Success will enable resilient and adaptative high-quality production methods that are highly demanded by Industry 4.0.

PI: C. González

2.9 Advanced processing of materials for transport, energy or health.

PI: Any Principal Investigator from IMDEA Materials Institute

3. INTEGRATED COMPUTATIONAL MATERIALS ENGINEERING

3.1 Enhanced toughness in Metamaterials: By leveraging nontrivial topology in architected geometry, the goal is to develop metamaterials that exhibit superior impact resilience and damage tolerance. This position offers a unique opportunity to contribute to next-generation material systems that combine robustness with intelligent structural response.

PI: J. Christensen

3.2 Rapid Solidification Processing: This research line focuses on studying and modeling the formation of far-from-equilibrium microstructures during rapid solidification processes (e.g., additive manufacturing) of metals and alloys. A key objective is to quantitatively predict the conditions that lead to microstructural transitions, enabling real-time tuning of processing parameters to fabricate materials with locally optimized properties (mechanical, electrochemical, magnetic, etc.)

PI: D. Tourret

3.3 Sustainable Alloy Design & Metallurgy: This research line aims to develop and apply innovative computational tools for designing novel metallic alloys and metallurgical processes that reduce environmental impact and enhance resource efficiency across their lifecycle.

PI: D. Tourret

3.4 Multiscale modeling of irradiation effects on the mechanical response: This research line aims at developing models able to describe and quantitatively predict the effect of irradiation on metals. The main target are metals for fusion applications. The final objective is being able to predict the effect of the irradiation dose in the macroscopic mechanical response of the material.

PI: J. Segurado

3.5 Multiscale simulation of Li batteries durability: the objective of this research line is to develop multiscale and multiphysical models to simulate the electro-chemo-mechanical response of batteries, with special focus on electrodes and their degradation. The final goal is being able to design optimal microstructures to produce more efficient and resilient batteries.

PI: J. Segurado

3.6 Modelling battery behavior under harsh conditions: the objective of this project is to develop and calibrate experimentally models and numerical methods that can represent the thermodynamic behavior of batteries under extreme conditions, especially those leading to self-ignition. The final models will prove crucial to designing more robust and fire-resistant battery configurations, accelerating their development.

PIs: I Romero and D.-Y. Wang

3.7 Multiscale Modelling of Structural Composites: The objective of this research line is to develop high-fidelity models capturing behaviour of structural composites at different length scales (from atomic to continuum). This topic is relevant for designing optimized high-performance composites for demanding applications.

PI: C. González

3.8 Integrated computational materials engineering in transport, energy and health.

PI: Any Principal Investigator from IMDEA Materials Institute

4. MULTISCALE CHARACTERIZATION OF MATERIALS AND PROCESSES

4.1 Operando LPBF Process Dynamics: The goal is to investigate laser powder bed fusion (LPBF) of metals through operando and in-situ characterization techniques to uncover fundamental insights into process dynamics and laser–matter interaction to enable the development of next-generation additive manufacturing pathways. Operando and in-situ characterization will be performed in the frame of the AM BAG (Beam Allocation Group) the IMDEA coordinates at the ESRF.

PI: F. Sket

4.2 Grain Growth and Corrosion in Zn Alloys: The focus is to utilize Diffraction Contrast Tomography to investigate the 3D grain structure evolution of Zn-based alloys for biomedical applications. The goal is to inform the design of next-generation biodegradable implants with tailored degradation profiles and enhanced biocompatibility.

PI: F. Sket

4.3 Biological sensors for smart medical devices: This project focuses on the use of advanced material technologies to monitor and respond to biological variables such as pH, temperature, mechanical forces, and electrical signals. By integrating sensing capabilities, the goal is to control biological processes through the targeted release of active molecules.

PI: M. Echeverry-Rendón

4.4 In-situ investigation of microstructural effects on hydrogen-induced dislocation activity: The aim of this research is to develop in situ methodologies by SEM/EBSD to help understand the effect of hydrogen in plasticity and damage mechanisms. Emphasis will be placed to reveal the interplay between slip localization, crack initiation and propagation in the presence of hydrogen.

PI: J. Molina-Aldareguía

4.5 Multiscale characterization of materials for transport, energy and health.

PI: Any Principal Investigator from IMDEA Materials Institute

SECONDMENT OPTIONS

The research proposal includes an inter-sectoral/interdisciplinary secondment of 3-6 months during the 30-month contract. ATENEA will provide PRs with a list of entities (associated partners) for each research area where they can perform secondments. The number of associated partners will be expanded with other IMDEA Materials' collaborators during the programme if necessary.

The ATENEA programme will be completed with the participation of several associated partners that will actively contribute to the different planned activities through their participation in research (hosting fellows during secondments) and training activities, increasing the scope and impact of the action. 21 associated partners from 10 different countries will be available for the PRs to perform secondments, including private companies (10), Universities/Research Centers (7), Technology Centers (3), and Foundations/Associations (1).

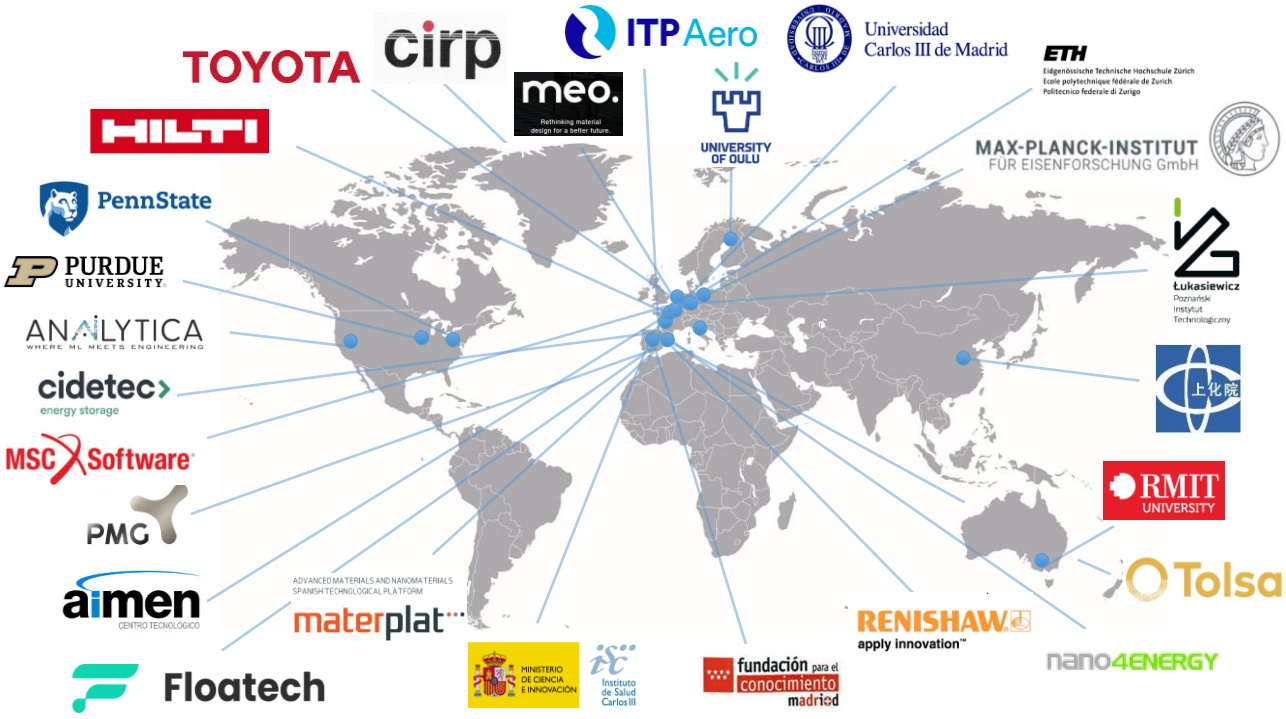

Figure 1. International network of ATENEA's associated partners

Through a collaborative approach with active participation of the industry and non-academic organisations, the programme will foster the intersectoral component, thus creating added value to the programme for a multiplier effect. In addition, strategic academic partnerships have been established with internationally recognised research centres and universities in the field of MSE worldwide. The goal is to create long-term collaboration frameworks of mutual benefit to develop exchange programmes for researchers and students, joint research projects and joint international PhD/postdoc programmes.

ELIGIBILITY CHECK, EVALUATION, SELECTION PROCESS

ATENEA fellows' selection workflow is described as follows:

Level 1 - Eligibility check (2-4 weeks). Applications received before the call deadline will be collected by the MO and their eligibility will be checked. In case of doubt, National Contact Points for MSCA will be consulted and the SB will make the final decision. Applications will be carefully checked against the mobility and experience rules. If documentation is missing or eligibility is not justified, the MO will contact candidates by e-mail to deliver the lacking documents within 14 calendar days. Eligibility will be reassessed before delivering a definitive list of eligible applicants.

Level 2 - External scientific evaluation (12 weeks). The quality of all eligible applications will be evaluated by the PRP in three separate aspects: scientific excellence, impact, and the implementation of the research project. The PRP will perform a peer-review evaluation of the applicant's CV and the quality of their research proposal involving three experts and a subsequent consensus meeting. A rapporteur from MADRI+D will prepare the ESR for each candidate. As a result, a list of pre-selected researchers who meet the required thresholds, and who have scored at least 85% in the scientific evaluation, will be invited to the interview phase. It is expected to reach 20 candidates (x2 the number of fellowships offered by the programme).

Level 3 - Face-to-face interviews (4 weeks). These interviews, also carried out by MADRI+D and organised by the MO, will be held via videoconference so that all candidates will be interviewed under the same conditions. Interviews will be conducted in English. In addition to the SC, IMDEA Materials representatives will also attend this meeting (i.e. Steering Board (SB) and Scientific Council (ScC)) as observers and collect the Final Evaluation Report (FER) that will include final scores and ranking list, once all scores have been collected and discussed by the SC.

The SC will have access to the following information: proposal and CV submitted, ESR, ranking list, and any other additional documentation that the SC may require. SC will receive all the above-mentioned information with enough time to prepare the interviews and review the proposal correctly.

The interview will be focused on the candidates' skills, motivation, career development prospects, cross-sectorial an international mobility, research impact and feasibility of the proposal in the context of the research programme.

Level 4- Ethics evaluation (3 weeks). An external Ethics Advisor will be appointed to identify and provide continuous oversight of the ethical aspects throughout the duration of the project. An Ethics Committee will perform an ethics review of the pre-selected proposals and give recommendations to ensure compliance with the national and EU legal framework. Should projects involve major unresolved ethical issues, they will be discarded before their implementation.

Level 5 – Validation (1 week). The SB chaired by the PM will validate and formally approve the final list of selected candidates and applicants on the waiting list based on the ranking order. The waiting list will contain at least 3 candidates, and underrepresented gender will be the first tie-breaking criteria for applicants with the same score, in order to seek gender balance amongst the selected PRs. Level 6 - Communication of results (1-2 weeks). The MO will communicate the results to all applicants. The successful applicants will receive an official invitation to join the ATENEA programme and will be given 14 calendar days to accept. If a candidate does not take up their invitation, the following candidate on a score basis will be contacted. Upon acceptance, IMDEA Materials will start the PR's appointment process (contracting formalities, visa application, migratory processes, soft-landing, etc.).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Different criteria/sub-criteria for selecting researchers under ATENEA will apply for the 3 stages that conform to the evaluation & selection process (Eligibility + Evaluation of Merits + Interviews). These criteria are summarised in the table below, along with the scoring, thresholds, and priority (in case of ex-aequo).

After the eligibility check, evaluation of merits considers 4 major items:

a) Educational aspects of the applicant

b) Working experience (including research)

c) Other activities in the context of career progression & development of personal skills

d) Research proposal submitted under one of the areas/themes available

These criteria will ensure a fair, objective, and consistent selection procedure, in alignment with the principles & requirements of the Code of Conduct. As a postdoctoral programme for experienced researchers, bibliometric indicators will be relevant but also other relevant aspects, skills & competences (teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management or scientific/technical implication in research projects, language skills, computer literacy and public awareness activities).

Shortlisted candidates going to the interview stage will be evaluated on criteria not so evident from the CV (creativity, level of independence, leadership skills, overall potential as researchers and self-identification of strengths & weaknesses).

The evaluation of merits will count 60 points towards the final score (30 points from the research proposal), with the remaining 40 points obtained from the interview, providing the final score & ranking (over 100).

	Selection & Evaluation criteria	Scoring (over 100)	Threshold	Priority (ex-aequo)
LEVEL 1: Eligibility check	Application submitted before the deadline / All necessary documents included / Mobility + Experience rules fulfilled / Academic requirements for postdoctoral fellows	***In order to pass to Step 2, applicants must fulfil all these criteria***		
LEVEL 2: External Scientific Evaluation	**Education:** graduate and postgraduate education (Masters, PhD) **(0-10). Research & working experience:** participation in projects, publications, attendance to conferences and events, patents, research skills and competences, support letters **(0-10). Research proposal:** description, innovative aspects, alignment with the programme's thematic areas, work plan, expected results **(0-30). Others:** mobility (research stays), supervision and mentoring, public awareness, English level, suitability of the profile to the programme, non-academic / industrial experience **(0-10)**.	**60**	**30**	**2**
LEVEL 3: Interviews	**Research Skills:** Scientific excellence, level of independence, motivation and potential as a future lead researcher, scientific quality of the presentation and answers during the Q&A session **(0-20). Communication Skills:** English skills & oral communication skills **(0-10). Interpersonal Skills:** Professional attitude, team player, reliability, motivation etc. **(0-10)**	**40**	**25**	**1**

Figure 2. Evaluation criteria, scoring and threshold per category during external scientific evaluation.

REDRESS PROCEDURE

All candidates will have the right to a redress procedure on how the application was handled in the evaluation and eligibility-checking process (Level 1-3).

Applicants may start the procedure according to the **redress template** at any stage of the evaluation process but must do so within 7 calendar days of receiving the notification of the result they wish to appeal. The request should be addressed to the ATENEA Project Manager (**info@atenea-cofund.eu)**, who will elevate the inquiry to the Steering Board in its role as Redress Committee. The Steering Board will give a response within 2 weeks upon receipt. If the redress is accepted and after reassessing the application, the proposal ends up in the funding range, the applicant will be offered a fellowship.

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS FOR THE FELLOWSHIPS

Considering the amount allocated to the COFUND allowance, the gross annual salary that fellows will receive, based on current labour costs, is 36,650€, with all contracts lasting for 30 months, not including family allowance or any other allowances they may receive. This amount will be increased with the corresponding family allowance. The total cost for the duration of the project is 126,900€. This cost will cover salaries, social security contributions, end-of-contract compensation and other costs included in the remuneration. Apart from this amount, fellows will have access to maternity/paternity leave, retirement, family and unemployment benefits.

Fellows and their families will have access to public health care coverage and medical assistance. Furthermore, the Institute will contribute to the following areas:

- **Family allowance** of 100 €/month if the PR has or acquires family obligations during the project (persons linked to them by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the Spanish legislation, or (iii) dependent children who are currently being maintained by the PR).
- **Research, training and networking costs** (19.500 €). Examples: consumables, small equipment, travel for dissemination, publication and patent fees, etc. Note that you will have an additional budget (9.000 €) for an academic or non-academic secondment period for a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 months.

When the need arises, special need and long-term leave allowances will be requested by IMDEA Materials to the funding agency to cover:

i) Additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities, e.g. assistance by third parties, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs

ii) Personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave longer than 30 consecutive days.

WORKING CONDITIONS, INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND AVAILABLE SERVICES/FACILITIES

Working conditions for recruited fellows under ATENEA will be the same as those of any other similar MSCA scheme for postdoctoral fellows (PF) and other postdoctoral researchers working at IMDEA

Materials. Recruited fellows will receive the same benefits and opportunities as other experienced researchers at IMDEA Materials. This includes work/lab space and equipment, infrastructure, and facilities access. The fellows will also enjoy complementary benefits, like dedicated research, training and networking cost category for the expenses related to their research projects.

Fellows will enjoy personalised assistance through the ATENEA MO, in addition to the IMDEA Materials management and administration team (20 people) and the HR Department at IMDEA Materials, who will provide information and personalised assistance regarding visas, work permits, social security, health assistance and soft landing (accommodation, schooling, etc.) and any other relevant issue for researchers and their families before and after signing their employment contract.

Since 2015, IMDEA Materials holds the 'HR Excellence in research' award (HRS4R), demonstrating its total commitment to good HR practices and researcher's support and development. IMDEA Materials Institute is also a member of the EURAXESS services network since 2014, acting as a Local Contact Point.

The Tecnogetafe technology park, where IMDEA Materials is located, offers a wide range of services and facilities, including a restaurant with a daily menu and a shuttle service to Getafe central and Atocha train stations for fast transfer to Madrid. IMDEA Materials provides regular free Spanish language classes and organises several social activities per year to facilitate the adaptation to the Spanish culture.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, INCLUDING STATUTORY WORKING PRACTICES, SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

PRs will benefit from employment conditions meeting regional, national and international standards. Spanish Law will govern any other aspects not outlined in the employment contract and, in particular, the Statute of Workers, approved in the Spanish Royal Law 1/1995 of March 24.

The programme will offer PRs a 30-month full-time working contract (1720 annual working hours). Upon signing the contract, PRs will automatically be registered under the general regime of the Spanish Social Security System, which stipulates the following benefits according to current legislation: healthcare (covers hospitalisation at home, in a health centre or a hospital), sick leave (IMDEA Materials complements the general conditions offered by social security up to the 100% of the employee's salary, ensuring the worker will always receive the full salary from the first day of the sick leave). Additional benefits include maternity/paternity leave (16 weeks), breastfeeding leave (possibility of reduction of working hours for 9 months provided by social security after maternity/paternity leave, which can also be condensed, translating into a 3-week break to be added to maternity/paternity leave), unemployment benefits (for a 2,5-year contract, the PR will have the right to 10 months of unemployment, and receive an average of 65% of their salary per month) and vacation (23 working days per year, plus 2 days of personal leave).

Also, IMDEA Materials will offer PRs the possibility to combine family and work life by offering a clear commitment to supporting family time (flexible schedule, teleworking, etc.). The PRs will be provided with tools for facilitating remote working if needed. Since April 2022, IMDEA Materials has had an occasional telework policy that allows employees to work up to 30% of their working time from home. Social benefits include public transport and/or parking costs.

DESCRIPTION AND COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEES INVOLVED

ATENEA will follow an OTM-R, impartial and equitable selection procedure, with vacancies advertised and published internationally. Selection will be based on international peer review. Evaluators will observe confidentiality, must declare any conflict of interest as soon as they are aware of it, and will be selected based on their expertise. The ATENEA programme is committed to avoiding any gender bias in the evaluation process.

The various committees involved in the selection process are presented below:

- Steering Board (SB): Chaired by the ATENEA Programme Manager (PM, Rosa Bazán (Head of the HR Department at IMDEA Materials)). Other members will be Javier LLorca, the ATENEA Scientific Coordinator (SC), Mar García (Head of the Finances Department at IMDEA Materials), Miguel Ángel Rodiel (Head of the Projects and Technology Department at IMDEA Materials) and Covadonga Rosado (General Manager at IMDEA Materials) (3women/2men). The SB is the decision-making body, and its role will be to approve the applicants' ranking list based on the Final Evaluation Reports (FER). The SB will also act as the Redress Committee (RC). The SB will stay active throughout the programme.

- Peer Review Panel (PRP): Each proposal will be evaluated by a panel composed of 3 external international experts. This panel will be externally arranged via the Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d (MADRI+D), the regional quality assurance agency for higher education in Madrid. This public body will assess the scientific evaluation of the applicants based on peer review. MADRI+D owns a database of more than 3.700 international experts from different sectors, profiles, and gender, covering more than 30 nationalities. It has extensive experience implementing regional and COFUND training programmes and performing evaluation procedures.

- Selection Committee (SC): Made up of PRP members: at least 1 of them involved in the peer review evaluation of the ATENEA proposals and 2-3 more international external experts. For the composition of this committee, gender balance and the inclusion of members from different sectors will be sought. The SC will participate in the interview process and evaluate each shortlisted candidate and proposal independently, considering the face-to-face interview evaluation criteria described below.

- Scientific Council (ScC): IMDEA Materials' statutory advisory body composed of 15 internationally recognised scientists from around the world with expertise in the different areas of research relevant to the Institute. The current members of the ScC can be seen on the IMDEA Materials website. ScC tasks include evaluating researchers' scientific activities, as well as those of the Institute as a whole to ensure excellence in research. The ScC can participate in the interview process as an observer to guarantee an open, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection process.

- Ethics Committee (EC): ATENEA will set up an Ethics Committee that will perform an ethics review of the pre-selected proposals. If a major ethical issue arises during the evaluation and/or selection processes of the proposals, EC will be consulted.

The ATENEA Management Office, under the supervision of the PM (Rosa Bazán) and the SC (Prof. LLorca) and supported by the Projects and Technology Department, will handle each administrative step of the selection process and assist the selection committees above. The MO will participate in the eligibility check of the proposals and will be responsible for: i) providing eligible applications to the PRP, ii) gathering evaluation forms and transferring reports to the SC, iii) scheduling interviews with preselected candidates, iv) collecting evaluations given by the PRP and SC and assembling the ESR and FER, v)

handing reports to the SB for validation, vi) coordinating the communication of applicant feedback, including information about their score, strengths and weaknesses from both scientific and interview evaluations and, finally, vii) bringing any appeal process to the SB.

Possible supervisors will NOT be involved at all in the evaluation & selection process, neither in the research proposal preparation nor in the evaluation process.

Selection of experts: The scientific evaluation of applications will be external to IMDEA Materials to guarantee an independent, fair, transparent and on-time evaluation as the programme timeline requires. MADRI+D will oversee the scientific evaluation of proposals. To ensure commitment, experts will be remunerated for their services according to MADRI+D policy. The external evaluation guarantees no conflicts of interest among evaluators involved with any of the submitted applications. Prior to their intervention, MADRI+D will require a signed declaration stating that, in the event of any conflict of interest, they will notify and remove themselves from the evaluation, and they must also maintain confidentiality of all information relating to it. Thus, the evaluation will be confidential and anonymous, with the evaluator's name unknown to applicants. The MO will hold a briefing meeting with MADRI+D's executive manager to share details of the evaluation process and guidelines based on ATENEA's criteria and subcriteria (section 1.1.3.). Evaluators will be selected according to their recent scientific background, expertise, experience and impact of their scientific production in the public and private sectors. They will be internationally recognised, have leading publications and actively participate in research. Their data (names, institution, etc.) will remain confidential during the whole process. Experts will provide feedback based on the "Guide for Evaluators" prepared by the MO. The expert selection will be composed taking into consideration gender, geographical origin, type of institution and sectors. MADRI+D is committed to preventing any gender bias, seeking to achieve the previously mentioned female participation of at least 45%; in addition, it will also promote the participation of international experts with involvement of the non-academic sector.

Each application will be evaluated by 3 international experts belonging to the PRP. Any contact between evaluators and applicants is forbidden during the selection process. MADRI+D will appoint one of the external evaluators as MADRI+D rapporteur, who will review the process and collect individual scores to average them. MADRI+D will deliver an evaluation report with the applicants ranked and the individual Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) of each of them.

GENDER DIMENSION AND OTHER DIVERSITY ASPECTS

IMDEA Materials fosters a tolerant, diverse and creative working environment that respects everyone regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, language or disability. In alignment with the institutional culture fostering gender equality, IMDEA Materials and all Associated Partners participating in ATENEA will promote and endorse gender balance & amongst scientific and non-scientific personnel, ensuring equal opportunities and working environments for both genders.

The **Gender Equality Plan of IMDEA Materials'** reflects the Institute's commitment to equality and optimal working conditions. Management's commitment to equal opportunities for men and women and diversity is also set out in the **Institute's Code of Ethics** in articles 7 (respect for people) and 9 (equal opportunities) and is considered a core principle of the Institute´s policy.

IMDEA Materials staff are committed to developing and foster the equality plan, promote balanced gender participation and promoting working conditions that result in a positive and enriching

environment. Additionally, IMDEA Materials has in place a harassment prevention protocol that includes measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Likewise, IMDEA Materials adheres to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers through the HR Excellence award granted by the EC, which includes aspects of non-discrimination, equality and gender.

Equal opportunities and diversity in terms of disability, special assistance, researchers at risk, LGBTQ+ community, etc will be fully taken into consideration both during the recruitment process and during the training programme execution.

Finally, as mentioned above, the gender dimension will be also considered during the application process by requesting candidates to assess the gender dimension in their research proposals if this is relevant.

ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

ATENEA will maintain the highest standards regarding equal opportunities following IMDEA Material's current policies of recruitment, equal pay, work-life balance and internationalisation practices aligned with The European Charter for Researcher, and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers acknowledged by the HR Excellence in Research award.

A policy for Equal Opportunities will be implemented through ATENEA to ensure a balanced participation of women, men and any other minority groups at all stages of the programme (from recruitment to career development), alongside equal opportunities and no discrimination on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion or social/economic condition of applicants. The programme will follow an equal opportunities policy in all its aspects.

Gender equality & diversity: The programme will pay special attention to women's presence in science, as well as support diversity and equal opportunities for other under-represented groups (researchers under risk, migrants, LGBTIQ+, etc.). ATENEA programme will aim for a representative gender balance at all levels: dissemination of the programme, selection and evaluation process, composition of selection and management committees, and in general, during the implementation of the programme. The gender ratios of expert evaluators will be monitored to avoid unconscious gender bias. The working and employment conditions will allow both female and male researchers to combine family and work life.

Career break: The programme is based on an open competition to any PR with no discrimination in any sense, so researchers resuming their career after a break will be encouraged to apply. Career breaks during the grant period, caused e.g. by parental leave or elderly care, or part-time work for personal reasons (i.e. child and care duties) will also be accepted and a special need allowance will be available (see table 1.1a). In those cases, the fellowship will be suspended, which will then be extended for the period of leave.

Researchers at risk: The ATENEA programme will be in line with the recommendations of the "**Guidelines for Inclusion of Researchers at Risk**" published by the EC, supporting applications from researchers who are at risk in their origin countries (due to discrimination, persecution, suffering and/or violence), or are seeking refuge out of these reasons or have recently found refuge in the EU. Researchers

at risk support will be explicitly mentioned in the recruitment calls, including the definition of researchers at risk provided in the EC guidelines. Support will be provided on a case-by-case basis, and may include:

a) Application submission by post or e-mail where online application requirements may discriminate against the researcher's circumstances;

b) Assignment of administrative Associated with document and relocation contacts to help with bureaucratic and practical issues;

c) Information provided about the assistance and support services of the Madrid Regional Government (Centres for the Participation and Integration of Immigrants, Integration plan for displaced persons from Ukraine, etc.) and will serve as liaison.

Researchers with disabilities: Researchers with disabilities, being long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, will be supported by the ATENEA programme. Available support may include accessibility of IMDEA Materials building according to national laws as well as Associated partners' infrastructure; accessibility measures of the online application tool and website and support in the request of the MSCA Special Needs Allowance, aimed to contribute to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities.

FURTHER INFORMATION

A Questions and Answers section is available on the website **www.atenea-cofund.eu**. If your question is not covered there, you may contact us directly by e-mail using the contact address provided (**info@atenea-cofund.eu**).